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512 activity over the farm and over the round of the year. Coupled with such greater variety, there is also a greater freedom of choice among necessary tasks. The necessities imposed by soil and climate permit a wider range of action and a less narrowly repetitious routine than do the ordered regularities of a household.

512 Yet within the greater range of activity there is still a
221 constant and nearly invariant pattern of work. The progression of the seasons brings a recurrent demand upon the farmer in the care of beasts, crops, and the land itself. Each season brings a task which must be performed, begun, or ended if the farmer is to raise his produce successfully.
512 Similarly, the custom and rivalry of the community exert
626 a further restriction upon his activity. He works within the influence of a long-established tradition of ancestral experience which has established for him the best dates for planting, for reaping, for breeding cattle, and for most of the tasks of his yearly round. The community holds that tradition in common, and the farmer is caught in the midst of a mesh of rivalries, competitions, and gossip in praise and condemnation, which binds him the more strongly to the accepted patterning of his yearly activity.

512 The seasonal rhythm of farm work reaches its lowest pitch
221 in winter. Activity is confined to house and haggard. On
462 bitter wet days little can be done beyond the haggard wall, but within it there is always a variety of necessary tasks involving care of farm machinery, implements, and buildings, and the housing and feeding of the cattle who cannot be driven to graze in the open field. In the house there is much that can be done. Harness can be patched, boots fitted with new soles, plates, and spikes, furniture repaired and occasionally new pieces made.

These tasks fall to the males of the household, the farmer father and his grown or adolescent sons. Any discussion of the annual round of farm work necessarily describes their

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labors, for all the tasks not strictly connected with the household fall in their province. We shall have occasion later to examine fully the sexual dichotomy of labor such a division of tasks represents.

For the countryman the Christmas season, from the beginning of Advent to Epiphany or "Little Christmas" (January 6), is the dead of winter. It is a period in which all farm work is at a standstill. The farmer has completed the last of his harvest and brought in the last of his potatoes from the field. The cattle are securely housed against the winter cold. The farmer feels himself free to sit round the house during the cold wet days and devote his season to holiday. The working day is at its shortest. Outside, the weather is usually unsettled, a cold rain falling on the sodden fields. It is for him as though the course of the year had stopped and were waiting, gathering its forces for the new year.

It is a period of great social activity in the local community. The very important religious ceremonies of the season call forth an intensified activity in the parish. There are constant visits back and forth; each house is ready to offer its hospitality to its neighbors; and the community gives itself over to dances, cards, talk, and calls. Not until the religious season closes with Epiphany does the countryman feel that the year begins anew.

With the beginning of the year, the cold uncertain weather with its succession of bitter wet days, leaving the fields too wet to work, does not end, but the Christmas season has marked the transition. The farmer must now make his plans for the spring planting, lay in his seed, repair machinery, and make ready for the season about to begin. On drier days he can busy himself in the field in cleaning ditches and drainages. In the evenings much of the conversation on visits and at home revolves round the coming planting, and both new and traditional experience with

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221 521 types, varieties, growth cycles, yields, and care of seeds and cattle passes round by word of mouth.

[805] 221 132 241 The first of February, St. Brigid's Day, marks the beginning of spring. For the countryman the return of the "hard" days of wind and clear weather herald the season of the land's drying off. Through February and March the gardens must be prepared, potatoes planted, and the fields made ready for the return of the cattle to them. Each hard day is a welcome opportunity, for only then can work in the fields go on. With favorable weather, the work of preparation is over in the beginning of March, and the actual planting begins. By St. Patrick's Day, with its promise of continuous hard weather, the gardens are ready for a second planting.

221 241 The potatoes demand the greatest attention. A fortnight after they are planted, they must be manured well with manure brought from the pile near the cattle cabins, and the ground must be leveled so that the plant will not go to stalk and thus fail to produce tubers. A fortnight more and the ground must be "softened" and the earth round the plant, which now shows its first leaves, must be "stirred." By the time May is reached, the potatoes must be "landed." Earth must be taken from between the long ridges in which the potatoes are planted and heaped up over them from each side. Thereafter nothing remains until the harvest but a summer spraying against blight.

221 231 438 Throughout the spring the cattle have demanded attention. March and April see the birth of calves and the beginning of the milk season and intensified butter-making. The great spring cattle fairs take place. The farmer must devote himself to the all-important business of buying and selling his milch and store cattle and his calves. At home the cattle demand constant care against hunger, disease, and cold as he mixes their diet of fast diminishing hay with the slowly returning pasture grass.

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The farmer's work in the gardens does not end with the "landing of the potatoes." Mangels and turnips and whatever grains he may grow must be planted, the soil prepared for them, and the growing crop weeded and tended. With the planting of the turnips, the last crop to be "put down," often as late as early June, his planting season is over.

With the return of warm weather and the drying off of the land, Irish summer begins. May is the first summer month. And by early May the bogs are dry enough to allow turf cutting to begin. The farmer must ordinarily find time between plantings to cut his year's supply of fuel and stack it into "reeks" to dry under the summer warmth. The turf cutting, though not connected with growing plants or animals, is an indispensable farm activity and takes its place among the never varying tasks of the agricultural round.

Once the turf is cut and stacked, the fruits of the farmer's labor begin to appear. His first crop is cabbage which was planted in a small garden near the house at odd free times during the early spring. Cabbage is practically the only green vegetable of the small farm diet, and the old people remember "Hungry July" or July *an chabáiste* when a delayed potato crop might condemn them to a month or more of semistarvation in which cabbage was the only food. Today new varieties of potatoes have been introduced which mature as early as late June.

The mature potatoes mark no harvest. They are left in the ground to be turned out of the ridges with spade or plough as occasion for them demands. Not until late November will the last of them be dug up.

The first true harvest and the most important one of the year is the haymaking. The cutting of hay begins in late July or early August. It is not only the most important activity of the year, insuring a year-long supply of fodder for the farm animals and the income-producing cattle, but it is

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221 246 also one that calls forth the united efforts of the whole family. It is a race, too, against time and rainy weather, and every effort must be bent to mow, rake, and let dry, and stack the meadow grasses, first in small haycocks, then in a great hayrick in the haggard, before rain brings rot to the lush crop. The farmers well speak of the harvest as "saving the hay."

221 241 [407 556] No sooner is the hay saved than the corn crops demand attention. Rye and oats are ready for the scythe or the mowing machine (only the larger farmers have reapers) by late August. The farmer and his sons must bind it, stack it, and leave it for several days drying. Later they will return to the fields and cart it back to the haggard for threshing. Not long ago the flail was still the most frequent means of threshing among the small farmers. In recent years steam-[407] powered threshing machines make the rounds, and threshing, which under the older system seems to have taken place as need arose for the grain, takes place now more regularly in late September and early October.

221 241 251 With the bringing in of the corn, the agricultural year draws to a close. Through October and November turnips and mangels are ready to be "pulled" and stored in the fields, near at hand to the haggard, in straw- and earth-covered pits. The potatoes which remain in the ridges must be turned up with spade and plough and similarly stored for the winter. All the root crops are indispensable supplies for men and animals during the months to come when there is no grass. The winter's supply of turf must be brought to the haggard from the reeks alongside of the bogs, where it [492] has been drying for the summer. The carting is an intermittent labor, performed by the men at odd times when they are free of other duties. As winter comes with November cold and rain, the cattle must be housed and made ready for the long, dark days of no grass to come; and the farmer is busy with them acquiring and disposing of his stock, as

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he was in the spring, for the autumn fairs bring him an important market.

If he has been fortunate and industrious, nothing remains for him to do but to prepare his fields for the next year. The soil he has used for root crops must be turned, and the gardens which he intends for grain are ploughed. As he follows the furrows, he can look back upon a year ended, and forward to another to begin. By the time his ploughing is finished, the dead of winter and the holiday season of Christmas is upon him and the yearly round is over.

Yet it is over only to repeat itself. For within the range of the seasonal variation and the demands of growing and maturing crops and animals the pattern of farm work in haggard, garden, meadow, and field is a constant one. Much the same progression of labor flows along year after year, and follows the farmer from boyhood till death. Yet there is much less restriction in choice of operation to be performed, in movement over space, in the possibility of day-to-day variation than in the case of the work of the household.

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342 tive builder has replaced the doomed roof by the thatched roof if, naturally, timber and material for thatching were at hand.

A great number of houses of this type have been in use as late as the 19th century in remote parts of Ireland. Many references are given in the travel sketches and other literature of that time.

Particular attention may be called to the houses in Achill, Co. Galway, which belong to booleying settlements.

Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, describing the island of Achill[22a] tell us about a certain kind of booleying (the cattle were brought down towards the coast when the season for fishing was on). They sketch the houses in a picture, pl. 34,a, and in words:

"The habitations of the islanders are very singular. Their houses are heaps of rude stones moulded by the tide, procured from the beach, uncemented; they are rounded at the gables, and roofed with fern, heath, and shingles, fastened on by straw bands. In the village of Dooagha, consisting [356] of about forty cabins, there is not a single chimney. Some of the wealthier graziers, however, have an odd custom of residing in such houses, or in houses of a still more simple construction, only during the summer months, when [221] the season for fishing is "on", and their cattle are brought down towards [231] the coast to feed on the young herbage. These hovels, they call 'Builly houses'."

From another traveller, Caesar Otway, who made a short excursion in Achill in the summer 1838, can be collected some valuable informations.[22b] Otway mentions (p. 353, 356) a certain type of wall construction, viz, the pilledpin double wall: two dry stone walls with the interspace filled in with sand. This is the same archaic construction, which Thomas describes from Lewis. It is also known from archaeological excavations in Scandinavia and elsewhere.

342 361 "An Achill village consisted of congeries of hovels thrown indiscriminately together, as if they fell in a shower from the sky, and their construction was as follows: — a dry stone wall was built of a form like an obtuse oval, for they had not arrived at the art of making a square quoin, or erecting a gable end. Outside this wall, and at about a foot distance, another loose wall was run up, and the space between the two filled with sea sand, and then this was roofed, generally with timber washed on shore from wrecks, and covered with heath, which covering did not reach over the outside wall, and form an eave, but rested on the middle between the walls, and the moisture from above passed, as it should, through the intervening sand."

"— — — we entered the village of Dugurth. Just such a village as I

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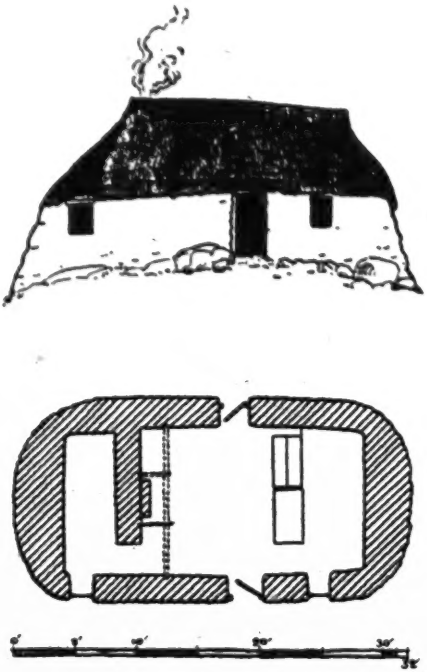

Fig. 4. Oval house. Inveran, Co. Galway.

have above described, but certainly containing some houses that *had* gable-ends; but for the most part of the construction I have alluded to, a dirty, dreary, uncouth place — — —."

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Later on (p. 401) Otway has learnt to know the summerherding (booleying) and the difference between winterhouses and summerhouses, and he compares the Irish summerhouses with the Swiss *chalets*.

"Keem, I said, was a singular village; it is only inhabited in summer — who would suppose that the Achillians had such a superfluity of houses, that they had both their winter and summer residences. The Greenlanders and Esquimaux are so changeful, from their excessive vicissitudes of heat and cold — but here I was surprised to find empty every house but two (and these were the residences of the coast-guard), all with their doors fastened

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342 and untenanted; and certainly such miserable wigwams, I had never before seen — all built, as I have already described, without gable-ends. It seems the owners of the village of Keem, and the renters of the adjoining district, have other houses in a distant part of the island, where they spend the winter and spring; thence they come when their oats and potatoes are planted and spend the summer months, herding their cattle on these heights, and leading a pastoral life. Thus in Switzerland they have their chalets on the hills, and in old times in Ireland the creaghts (as they were called) had their boolies on the mountains; but I don't think I ever saw a summer-herding village before."

342 What is said to have been the last oval house in Achill (pl. 33,a), was destroyed in the last two years. An old man (he is seen in the doorway) had lived in it and would not change to any other kind of residence. When he died, the house was pulled down.

This house had dry stone walls. In the middle of the floor stood a beam of bog fir from the top of which beams and branches, also of bog fir, spread out like the ribs of an umbrella, to carry the thatched roof. (This central beam may have been a temporary structure? Cf. p. 192 about the *tuireadh* of the wickework house described by O'Curry). The house had no windows and no chimney. The smoke came out through a hole in the roof.

In the year 1936, I measured an inhabited oval house in Inveran, Co. Galway, fig. 4 and pl. 34, b, 35, a, b. This house embodies many interesting features known from prehistoric times. It is built upon very uneven ground and runs from east to west. The several feet thick walls slope as the walls of the oval clochán from the ground upwards. In later times these, built as dry stone walls, have been plastered from outside and whitelimed and the windows added.

The interior is made up by one room, which, however, is divided up to the west by the hob and a protecting wall behind it. Here is the bedroom, in harmony with the wide-spread old tradition mentioned in my former article.[12c] To the east, a dresser and a table cut off the lower part to form another bed-alcove.

The house has no outside chimney, but a basket resting on beams leads the smoke out through a hole in the roof. This basket is wattled from osiers and covered with plaster. As the wall behind the fireplace does not go up as far as the roof, canvas is hung to complete the wall.

There are the usual two doors, central and opposite to each other.[12d] The roof of straw, scollop-thatched, rests on couples of beams, supported on the

 [TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P. 189 ---- ANALYST]

PLATE 33.

a. Oval house. Keel, Achill, Co. Mayo. Photographed in 1903.
b. Clochán, used for storage purpose. Blasket Island.

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342 171 These are formed of wooden posts, interlaced with branches of trees, like wicker-work, and covered on the outside with turf."

Robertson" describes a type of tenant's house, the construction of which must be like the wicker-work houses above-mentioned. "When such a house is to be built, the first thing done is to construct a coarse frame of wood, corresponding to the dimensions of the house, in length and breadth; then upon this frame to fix standards inclining inward, at proper distances, which rise to the height of the intended wall, and are kept in a firm position by being morticed in a tree above of the same dimensions with the tree below. These standards are closely woven with wicker work, to keep the sods from falling in; which, being built on the outside, finish the side walls of a creel-house."

342 221 As the Irish booleying custom, *buaile*, doubtless preserved many primitive and archaic building traditions, it should form an important subject of study also with regard to wicker-work huts. However, the summer huts which are mentioned in the Welsh laws are not referred to in the Irish lawtracts. Professor Mac Néill has kindly informed me that this does not mean that the *buaile* custom did not exist in ancient Ireland. "It was probably practised by the less opulent class who had a limited supply of pasture land. The laws have little to say about these, as in general they were under the jurisdiction of a noble."

342 343 The huts erected in later times of sods or turf and used as shelters for donkeys, pigs, etc., which can be met with in various parts of Ireland, would also well repay study. In the literature of the 19th and the early 20th centuries can be found travellers' accounts of such houses, although they seldom go into details about the construction. I refer, *e. g.*, to a description of Caesar Otway's from his "Sketches in Erris and Tyrawly", an account of his travels in Northwestern Ireland in 1840:

"The dwellers here were bog troglodytes — the foundations of their dwellings are sunk eight feet or more below the surface of the surrounding black bog, the walls are constructed of wet sods, cut off from the surface of that bog; there is no door or door-case, no chimney; the orifices by which the people enter, and through which the smoke *should* issue, are filled up as suits the wind, with bundles of heath or turf-kreels, filled with potato-stalks; a drain comes out from under the floor of the dwelling, from which the superabundant moisture escapes, or else it would be a common boghole: but, by its means, the water that springs abundantly from the sides and bottom, flows away, and the people sitting or standing within, are free from actual overflow."

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462 of a Solomon Grundy. A farmer's wife of Clare
512 divided her week more rigidly in describing it than she did in practice. "On Monday", she said, "I do the washing, on Tuesday the ironing, on Thursday I make butter, on Friday to market, on Saturday I get ready for Sunday, and on Sunday I go to mass and do as little as I can." Really it is only on Sunday that any change seriously alters the daily round; for the country-people are strict sabbatarians, at least regarding work.

241 Work on the 'land' beyond the haggard and the
462 house is less restricted. It has a greater range over
221 the farm and offers a wider variety of tasks round the year. There is a wider freedom of choice among tasks as well. Soil and climate are just as insistent as is the household, but they do not force such narrow regularities.

Yet each season brings a task the farmer must perform. Custom and rivalry in the community restrict him as well. He is in fact less free to choose the date of sowing than his wife the hour of dinner. Long-established tradition and ancestral experience imprint upon his mind the best dates for planting, for reaping, for harrowing, for breeding cattle, and so forth. The farmer is caught, willingly of course, in a mesh of rivalries, competitions, condemnations, which binds him the more strongly to the community's patterning of his yearly round.

The seasonal rhythm of farm work reaches its low in winter. On bitter wet days little can be done

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beyond the haggard wall, as we have noted. All the many tasks of patching and repair are men's work, they fall to the farmer-father and his sons. The annual round is theirs, as the daily one belongs to the women.

For the countryman, the Christmas season, from the beginning of Advent to the Epiphany or 'Little Christmas', is the dead of winter. All farm work is at a standstill. The farmer is free to devote the season to holiday. Outside the weather is unsettled, a cold rain falling on the sodden fields. For him the year has stopped and is waiting to renew its forces.

With the Epiphany, the succession of bitter wet days does not end, but holiday does. One's mind turns to the earnest work of the year to come. The farmer plans his spring planting. On drier days he can clean ditches and drains; he can lay in seed and repair machines. In the evenings, conversation on visits and at home revolves round the coming planting and calving, and traditional experience goes from mouth to mouth. In fact, it is the time for all new plans, for it is Shrovetide, the season of match-making and marriage.

St. Bridget's Day, February 1, marks the beginning of spring. For St. Bridget promised every second day thereafter would be 'hard'. The return of the 'hard' days of wind and clear weather herald the land's drying-off. Through February and March, gardens must be prepared, potatoes planted,

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fields made ready for the return of the cattle to them. Each 'hard' day is more than welcome, for then work in the fields can go on. By St. Patrick's day, they say in Clare, the potatoes should all be 'down'; after that there still remains much to do, though the worst is over. St. Patrick promised that after his day *every* day would 'come hard'.

Through the rest of the spring, work is at its most intense. Potatoes must be 'stirred' and 'landed'; other root crops 'put down'. March and April see the birth of calves and the beginning of the season of greater milk yields and intensified butter-making. Before that in February and March the 'great spring fairs' take place, and the year's buying and selling of cattle must be done.

Then, gradually, with the return of warm weather and the drying-off of the land, Irish summer begins. May is often the first summer month. Soon the bogs are dry enough for cutting the year's supply of turf and for stacking it to dry under the summer warmth at the bog's edge.

Once the turf is cut and stacked, the first fruits of the farmer's labour begin to appear. The first crop is cabbage, which was planted at odd times very early. It is practically the only green of the diet and old people remember June or July *an chabáiste*, 'the hungry month', when a delayed potato crop might condemn them to a month or more of semi-starvation upon cabbage. Today new varieties of potatoes mature as early as June. But

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the mature potatoes mark no harvest; they are turned out of the ridges with spade and plough as they are needed.

The first true harvest, and the most important one of the year, is the haymaking. Mowing begins in late July or early August. The haymaking is a race against time and rainy weather. Every effort must be bent to mow, rake, dry and stack the grasses, first in small haycocks, then in the great hayrick in the haggard, before rain brings rot to the lush crop. The farmers speak of it aptly when they call it 'saving the hay'.

Corn crops, oats and rye, come in next, and then through September, October and November the other roots, mangels and turnips, must be 'pulled'. Turf must be brought down to the haggard from the bog-ricks; and everything made ready for man and cattle for the coming winter. Autumn fairs bring a new high in buying and selling cattle; and with the last of them, winter sets in again and Advent has returned. In late November the farmer may turn over his gardens with the plough, to prepare them for the spring. As he follows the furrow, he can look back upon a year ended and forward upon a new one to begin.

Yet, unvarying as this yearly round is, and much as the recurrent patterns of work in garden, meadow and field follow the farmer year after year, from boyhood to death, this work—man's round—is freer and more various, even perhaps

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221 241 462 more arduous, than woman's. We must remember this difference. It reflects an important dichotomy between the sexes in the organization of labour.

462 We can see this dichotomy even when the group works as a unit. At various crucial points in the annual round we have just followed, the whole family bends to the tasks at hand together. At potato planting, turf-cutting and haymaking, one can see them working in unison. Even the young children contribute their share to the common rhythm of the task. Yet the woman's role is separate. It is auxiliary; the simpler, less arduous tasks fall to her. The heavier work and command of the enterprise rests with the men. The plough, the harrow, the mower, the scythe, the spade and the turf-cutting *slán* are regarded as masculine implements. The attitudes of the countryside forbid a woman's using them. In the same way, they heap ridicule upon the thought of a man's interesting himself in the feminine sphere, in poultry, or in the churning.

[777] Immemorial folklore bolsters this division. The woman is unlucky to masculine enterprises, for instance: it is dangerous to see a woman on the road to the fair. Likewise, man is dangerous to the woman's work. If he so much as takes his lighted pipe out of the house while she is churning, he may 'take the butter', through fairy magic.

In this dichotomy, of course, the male sphere bears higher value. But dichotomy implies no de-

181 Fleure writes of Wales, another section of "The Celtic Fringe": "the isolated rural communities are, of themselves, poor in material resources, and their efforts have, therefore, not until recently gone into great buildings or sculpture or painting or orchestral music, all demanding a large equipment. Rather have they found their scope in poetry and oratory and song, arts in which the poorest labourer can often compete on fairly equal terms with his richer neighbours. In this way, and in others as well, poverty has been a safeguard of an intensely democratic feeling as well as a help towards the survival of the language and its associations." In the field of human export, too, Ireland's products are scholars, doctors and poets as well as spade-workers.

243 262 114 There are, as we shall try to show, many other features of Irish life which can be related to the pastoral tradition. Because of its value as fodder and for reasons of soil and climate, oats is the "corn" crop of Atlantic Europe. Apart from the value of oats as food for livestock, oatmeal in various forms has been and still is largely consumed, and its baking into thin pan bread over an open fire instead of in an oven has helped to preserve the prehistoric open hearth with its varied 114 and interesting gear and traditions. Ignoring the literary and archæological evidence, many writers have assumed that the inhabitants of ancient Ireland were entirely pastoral and nomadic. On this topic much solemn nonsense has been written, and it gained wide currency because it seemed both to condemn the Irish and to corroborate the prevailing view of man's cultural evolution from hunter to agriculturist through a stage of pastoral nomadism. It now seems certain that man learnt the elements of cultivation at least as soon as he learnt how to domesticate animals, and in the diffusion of these ideas through Europe from the Near East, Ireland received the germs of both sources of food-production at about 114 the same period, let us say 4,000 years ago. There are many ● 221 signs that in Ireland's dark and middle ages cattle played an even greater role in rural life than in earlier prehistory and later history, but at all times the unit of the fixed family

[Text Continues TOP of P. 10]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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114 221 settlement, the baile or townland, kept its significance and its importance. In many cases what has passed for nomadism has been the ancient and normal practice of seasonal movement to the hill pastures, which is still not entirely abandoned and has left many traces in the life and landscape of the country (Chapter 6).

181 462 In essentials Ireland is and has been a peasant country, and it may be well to examine objectively some of the general characteristics of peasant society. A permanent link with the soil on which man lives and works is the essence of a peasantry; and in this work of the fields woman co-operates with man. For her, however, field work is a secondary task since her main interests must lie in the house and in the milking of the stock. Work with spade and plough and the care of the draught animals is for the men, although carrying—necessarily done by women in primitive communities where the men must have their hands free to use their weapons—often remains an activity of the peasant woman where not entirely superseded by animal transport. Where fishing and shore-collecting engage the men's attention the women's sphere of action and responsibilities are widened.

181 323 Among tasks in which the women of some peasantries play a leading part is the making of domestic pottery, but this tradition, though strong in Neolithic Ireland, gave way to the use of metal "pots" and vessels of wood, the making of which was the work of the men. Nor have local survivals of hand-made pottery, like the Barvas ware of the Hebrides, been recorded here.

181 443 796 Periodic gatherings for exchange and social intercourse are a feature of peasant life which has contributed to the growth of towns. The immemorial meetings in fairs and markets have been weakened by modern means of transport and by government marketing boards; and in some parts of the country the whole fabric of rural society is being undermined in consequence. As in North Africa to-day, the fairs were often held near some ancient burial place, and the assemblies were linked with religious festivals which brought

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174 [491] 361 Donegal parish in 1837—and all the carrying depended upon slide cars and creels (Chapter 12). The village had neither shop nor inn, and required little besides salt and iron from the market town. These self-sufficing communities were held together by blood ties and by the exchange of services under the Irish open-field or "rundale" system of cultivation. Around the house-clusters were small walled gardens and haggards, but the arable land was an unenclosed open field in which each holder had his scattered patches, averaging perhaps a quarter of an acre in area. There are cases on record where [423] 29 partnership-peasants shared 422 plots of ground, where one man held 32 different patches, or again where 26 people had shares in a field of half an acre. In some districts it is known that the plots changed hands periodically. but no memory of this survives in the areas I am acquainted with. Live stock was sometimes subject to joint-ownership, with disastrous results where, for instance, three men claimed shares in a horse and could not agree as to the ownership of the fourth leg. But most of the stories that are told about rundale farming belong to the period of its decline.

174 ● 221 361 Between the cultivated patches, which were dug with the spade or ploughed and devoted almost exclusively to potatoes and oats, ran waste strips or balks ("mearings," "bones" or "ribs") often left as much as three yards wide, apparently from a sort of pride, though they had their uses both as a source of hay and as tracks for the creel ponies when they could not enter the waterlogged plots. In the absence of fences all livestock had to be tethered, spancelled, herded, or sent to the mountain pastures during the crop season, which traditionally began on St. Patrick's Day (March 17th) and ended on the last day of October (Hallowe'en), when the animals were free to wander over the whole townland throughout the winter. "Any that had not their potatoes dug, or other crops off the ground, were much injured, neither could any one man venture to grow turnips, clover or other green crops . . . no one would attempt to manure better or otherwise improve his proportion, as his neighbour's cattle only would have the benefit." It is clear that the introduction of the

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potato was one of the factors that led to the decline of rundale agriculture, both because of its late harvest and because it resulted in increased populations which brought disastrous subdivision of the holdings. Under the " gavelkind " code of inheritance a man's property was divided equally among all his sons, so that the impossibly small fields came to be spoken of not as the standard " cow's grass," but as a " foot " and even a half-foot or " cleet."

Much has been written of the drawbacks of the rundale system. It is so easy to condemn it—the " fights, trespasses, confusion, disputes and assaults " to which it gave rise, the wretched poverty which it bred, the evil consequences of dwelling in packed house clusters—that it is well to recall the better side of the system before it fell into decline. A writer in 1853 has left his " recollections of nights of social converse, of aid in sickness, of sympathy in joy and sorrow, of combined operations of defence against bailiff or gauger which contrasted mournfully with the solitary grandeur of the new dwelling." Another apologist wrote : " the closer the rundale system is followed, the more the unwritten customs and regulations observed, the more do intelligent tenants regret a departure from them." Many of its better features, indeed, have survived the enclosure movement and the separation of farms ; we may cite co-operation in farm work and the social fire-side evenings or " caileys." " Gatherings " of many kinds, for work and pleasure, distinguished the rundale communities. Every village had its musician, piper or fiddler, who was often maimed in some way and supported himself by his skill. Folk songs, occupational airs and epic tales were kept alive in this way.

It was formerly the task of an appointed leader in a townland or group of townlands to see that customs were observed, to arrange the casting of lots in re-allotting strips, and so on. Probably we should see in the " king " not long ago recognized as leader in such communities as Rathlin and Tory a relic of this custom.

To understand the village-system in working order we must see it as part of a wider pattern in which cattle-herding

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played a dominant part, to which the claims of agriculture were subordinated. It was customary for the young folk, and in some cases the whole family, to leave the village as soon as the crops were sown and migrate to summer pastures among the hills. This custom is still widely followed in various mountain areas in Europe, for instance Switzerland and Spain, where it can be shown to be of great antiquity. To it the name " transhumance " is given, but we shall use the term " booleying," from " booley" (milking place), or summer hill dwelling. It is strange that scarcely any attention has been given or any importance attached to this aspect of the Irish past, despite its direct bearing on the social and cultural as well as the economic development of rural Ireland, on language and literature, music and the arts. From rare memories or survivals of the custom—it is still followed on Achill Island—and by analogy with transhumant societies overseas, we can envisage the part played by booleying in ancient Ireland, where its wide occurrence was facilitated by the presence of scattered mountain masses in all parts of the island (Chapter 2). We shall refer to some survivals below. The illustration (Fig. 15) shows a bullock's " horn " which used to be blown not long ago at a farm in the Torr Head district of Co. Antrim, to summon people together. One is tempted to see in this custom a relic of the pastoral heritage. Traditions of hospitality are a common accompaniment of pastoral life: there is no need to stress the reputation of the country people in this connexion, but it is relevant to add that the lavish hospitality for which the landed aristocracy have been famous may well have been derived from Gaelic custom.

Fig. 15.

Wherever it is found, this seasonal nomadism assumes a ritual significance, especially where, as in the old Ireland, cattle are its main concern. Thus the departure of the herds and their attendants in spring is accompanied by festivities and ceremonial; and the return to the homestead in autumn is the occasion for the rejoicings and reunions of Hallowe'en, when the youngsters play seasonal games among themselves and tricks upon their elders. We shall revert to this topic in chapter 17. Here we are concerned rather to describe the life

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among the hill pastures. In spring, after a long winter, the cows were often so weak that they had to be carried out of the byre. When sufficiently restored they were driven, together with the sheep and in some cases the poultry, to the hills. In Donegal, according to an account written a century ago, "the migration usually took place upon a fixed day, the junior members of the family generally perform the journey on the top of the household goods, and thus the chair or two, the creels, and the iron pot, the piggin, and the various selected *et cetera*—as if invested with a sort of dull locomotive power—creep along the roads. The little churn is slung on one side of the animal, into which the youngest child is often thrust, its head being the only part visible."

Many townland names ending in "booley" or "boley" assist us in our search for evidence, while in many places the actual remains of the booleys can still be seen. They were generally built of sods or turf, or of wicker-work faced with sods, and roofed with branches and heather. Some were circular and others square or rectangular, and the latter had two opposite doors through which, it seems, the cows passed in turn as they were milked inside, a tradition which is still kept up in the two-doored cabins of Co. Kerry, where Dr. Campbell has described how, in summer, the cows are milked in the kitchen, entering at the front door and being driven out by the back. The booleys were built in clusters, the inhabitants of a particular "town" presumably living together. Butter-making was the chief occupation, and the food of the herders consisted largely of "whitemeats" that is milk products such as curds and whey. Cheese seems to have been of minor importance, though sheep were milked and it is probable that, as is customary among the transhumants of southern Europe, the milk was made into cheese. The butter appears to have been preserved—it was un-salted—by burying it in wooden, skin, bark or cloth containers in the bog. This "bog-butter" frequently turns up in turf-cutting operations: it is white or yellowish in colour and smells like ripe old cheese. A keg dug up in Co. Meath was found to contain over seven stones of butter.

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Fig. 16. Co. Mayo.

Fig. 17. N. Ireland.

The evening milking was often followed by dancing to the music of an itinerant piper, and there were many diversions for the cattle-tenders through the long summer days. Old tales and songs were kept alive among the hills where many of them had their origin. Spinning and knitting occupied the women, and the youngsters amused themselves by cutting and carving wooden objects and by making toys out of rushes—rattles (Fig. 16), cages for butterflies (Fig. 17), dainty rush baskets for gathering "fruogs" (bilberries) (Fig. 18) and ornamental whips and sticks of bound rushes. Little wicker cages were made for catching birds. Various instruments and whistles for calling together the animals were constructed, and there have been discovered deep in the bogs long horns which curiously resemble those still used by the Carpathian shepherds. I have read that in the Scottish Highlands that ancient ceremonial instrument, the bull-roarer (Fig. 113) played a part in the cattle herding. We shall refer to its survival in Ireland in Chapter 19. As in modern Norway, it might be said that "the time spent in the mountain pastures was the happiest time of the year. Every living creature wanted to go to the mountains."

Although this booleying, like the rundale village system which it accompanied and helps to explain, is now almost entirely a thing of the past, it has left many traces in the customs and traditions of the countryside. Hill pastures, now devoted mostly to sheep-rearing and visited only by the shepherd, are still held in common and reckoned in sums, lumps or collops, the unit of mountain grazing which fixes the relative grazing capacity of different kinds of stock. Thus a cow may be reckoned equal to four yearlings, five goats or sheep or say twenty geese. The decline of seasonal nomadism affected the balance of rural life and work and left a summer surplus of young folk who were free to emigrate or to engage in harvesting whether in the east of Ireland or later in Britain, while frequently the women became vagrants during the summer. In Ulster, where the incoming "planters" were bitterly opposed to the "creaghts," as the transhumants were called, the custom explains the ease with which, throughout

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the 17th century, the natives withdrew themselves to the mountains, where they lived a life that some historians have mistaken for aboriginal nomadism. 221

The booleying tradition, finally, throws light on many of the customs connected with cattle and sheep, and helps to explain the absence of the dairy in permanent dwellings which formerly had to serve as winter houses only, most of the dairy work being done in summer. It also helps us to attribute to custom rather than solely to laziness and neglect the Irish farmer's traditional indifference to the fate of his crops during the summer months. " Spring and harvest time," we quote a typical 19th century observer, " are the only periods at which the peasants exert themselves, and then they work very hard; for the rest of the year they are idle."

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Rush "Frueg" Basket
Fig. 18. Co. Antrim.

The old customs of tending (" herding ") the cattle and tethering or spancelling them also derive from the rundale phase with its lack of field-divisions and fences. " Cattle, sheep, pigs and goats," wrote Arthur Young, " are all in bondage, their forelegs tied together with straw . . . . cocks, hens, turkeys and geese all have their legs in thraldom." Various devices for limiting the freedom of farm animals are still widely used: even the hen with her chickens around her will be seen tethered by the leg to a stone or iron weight. Where animals still run in common under the system of " sums " it is necessary to give them distinguishing marks. Apart from the well-known methods of branding or colouring the sheep's wool it is the custom in parts of Ireland, as in Wales, to ear-mark sheep by cutting or notching the ear with proprietary shapes. In Clare Island the geese are " tokened " by having holes punched in their webbed feet. Incidentally it is worth noticing that, so far as I am aware, the iron-tipped shepherd's crook is unknown in Ireland, a bent ash stick taking its place. " Gatherings " and co-operation are of course a feature of sheep-shearing and dipping. Sheep-pens of dry stone construction are often associated with ancient settlements among the hills: they are of various shapes and would repay study.

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CHAPTER X.

SEEDTIME.

Except in a few districts where winter wheat is grown the farmer's year may be said to begin in spring when, from February on, the land is ploughed or dug for the new crops. Several arguments are advanced against autumn ploughing—that the land is too wet and that the winter destroys the seed-bed—but as with many other things the preference is best explained by deep-rooted custom. So long as the land was held in rundale autumn ploughing was out of the question since the stock had the run of the whole townland after Hallowe'en.

We have very little information about old Irish ploughs. Owing to the fact that they were made almost entirely of wood archæology cannot help us much, but shaped stones that may have been shares and coulters have been found, and plough-irons do sometimes turn up. The discovery by Dr. O'Neill Hencken of a large iron coulter in the Ballinderry crannog shows that a heavy plough necessitating a big team had reached Co. Westmeath by the 10th century A.D. Pipe-rolls of the 13th century refer to plough teams of 8 oxen in Co. Meath: this was the normal complement under the English three-field system. At the other end of the scale, as it were, there survived into living memory along the west coast the custom of attaching the horse to the plough or harrows by the tail, and although the practice was severely condemned it had the advantage that the horse would stop if the plough

[p. 87]

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CHAPTER XVII

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS: THE COUNTRY TOWN.

Although the Celtic year began with All Hallows Day (November 1st), for our purpose we may regard it as starting on February 1st, or St. Bridget's Day. This was the first day of Spring, and of field work, for the Saint promised that every second day thereafter would be hard and dry. The circle of the year ran its course through the seasons, punctuated by certain fixed festivals and by the uncertain advent of births, marriages, illness and death. It is with the fixed festivals that we are concerned in this chapter. The four seasons have their opening days on the first of February, May, August and November, and the celebration of these days and the preceding Eves is a pagan survival breaking through the Christian calendar. The festivals of February and of November have been taken under the special protection of the Church through their association with St. Bridget and All Saints, but many traces of the "elder faiths" of nature worship live on, sanctified by tradition if not always by the Church.

On St. Bridget's Eve (January 31st) it is customary for country children to pull rushes—they must not be cut with a knife—and take them home to be made into crosses by the family gathered round the fire. A fixed ritual, varying from one district to another, determines the procedure, and it traditionally included the St. Bridget's supper of pancakes or sowens taken from a plate laid on top of a rush cross. The

221 796 805 [821] [996]
221 796 788 285
[p153]

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crosses, of various patterns, are hung up over doors and beds and in the byre to bring good luck. Some of them are very elaborate, but the oldest style, to judge from its Celtic form, is the three-legged cross (Fig. 106) which is specially associated with cattle and is not, like the other shapes, taken to church to be blessed, a ceremony which is kept up even in parts of Belfast. In the Glens of Antrim a small bed is fashioned out of rushes and placed by the fire on St. Bridget's Eve: the door is left unlatched so that the Saint may come in and rest.

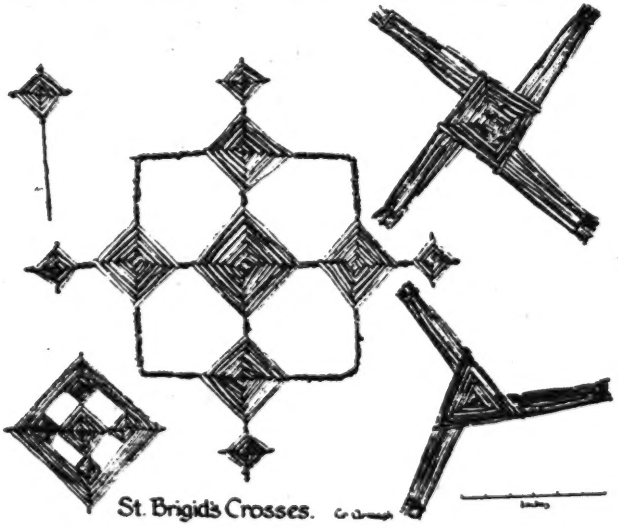

Fig. 106.

In Co. Kerry young lads called "Biddy Boys" wear hats of straw on the first of February, and in other parts of the west, I am told, "Bridget Belts" of plaited straw are worn.

The next important day in the calendar comes about the middle of the three months of Spring, that is at the time now kept as a national holiday in North and South alike—St. Patrick's Day, March 17th. This is regarded as the proper time to commence sowing, and the countryman counts on

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planting his first potatoes on that day, when St. Patrick 796
" turned the warm side of the stone uppermost." In the 221
Antrim Glens the hay meadows are closed on St. Patrick's Day, and under the rundale system the animals which had run through the townland from Hallowe'en were now carefully herded or driven to the rough grazing grounds so that they could not trespass on the unfenced cropland. A little later come the many memories of seed-time ritual and the spring sacrifice now represented in Easter egg-rolling games.

The May festival ranked next in importance to that of November: these are the major turning points of the year, where Nature decks herself in fresh green or in " rich Autumn's golden quittance." On the first days of these months the cattle were numbered, and it is a commonplace that these are still the rent or " gale days " in Ireland. On May Day the young crops were visited with torches and the cattle blessed before being driven to the mountain booleys, and hill-top fires played a large part in the rites. These Beltane fires were originally [372] need-fires, that is they were produced by the friction of two pieces of wood. All hearth fires were extinguished on May Eve, and re-lit from the sacred fire. It is still a common [777] superstition that it is unlucky to give away fire, even as light for a pipe, on May Day, for that would be to give away your luck for the year. In Donegal it is considered unlucky to be the first house to show smoke on May morn: the cattle are milked and the byres cleaned before the fire is made up. The Beltane ritual included the eating of oatcakes " which must not touch iron," and dancing three times clockwise round the fire. Many volumes could be written on the customs and superstitions connected with this festival, touching fire and food, salt and butter, the rowan and the flowers of the field, especially the marsh-marigold or May-flower. The city urchins have turned the celebrations into a prolonged parading of May Queens and collecting of pennies. See Chapter 19.

It is probable that fires continue to be lit on May eve in 372
some parts. Certainly the mid-Summer festival which 221
follows on St. John's Eve (June 23rd) still keeps its hold, for 796
then fires will be seen blazing on hilltops in almost every Irish

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372 796 221 county. Originally they were intended, it is thought, to keep the sun, now about to decline, on its course, but they also played a part in the blessing of crops and animals. In Donegal until lately a burning turf was flung into each patch of growing corn. These and the other relics recorded are of course, not peculiar to Ireland: they are part of the common heritage of the ancient civilization of Eurasia. There is evidence that this festival was important also in fishing communities. The inhabitants of the Galway Claddagh, for instance, marched through the town in procession on St. John's Eve, "gaily dressed and miming, to the accompaniment of music; they collected money for merrymaking from the townspeople, and spent the evening dancing, drinking, and lighting bonfires in their own quarters."

796 221 The Lammas festival is nowadays particularly associated with fairs, and the first of August, is referred to in Gaelic as "Lewy's Fair." But other traces of old custom survive. My colleague Dr. O'Brien tells me that in mid-Down, on the first Sunday in August, crowds of countryfolk assemble, accompanied by fiddlers, at the great prehistoric hill-top cairn on Slieve Croob. The "Criocan Thorn," in the heart of Slieve Bloom, is the scene of similar assemblies on the last Sunday in July. Here they dance to the pipes, and bilberries are eaten: the day is called "Fraochán (bilberry) Sunday."

So the year goes on its course to the culminating festival of All Hallows. We have touched on one of its former functions, the reunion of the family after the summer booleying, in Chapter 6. It is an occasion of reunion still: all Irish [574] folk like to be at home on this date, which is in some ways the most significant of the year, for it corresponds with what was once the New Year. Fires were lighted to mark the end of the [372] period of growth and to herald the new year. (In England the ceremonies have become assimilated to the Guy Fawkes celebrations on November 5th). As at Beltane, the Halloween fire used long ago to supply light to rekindle the domestic fire, which now serves as a substitute in the many games of divination played by the young at this time. Hazel-nuts, apples and other fruits of the autumn take an important place

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in the combined pastimes of feasting and foretelling the future, and cabbages figure in many an old game, for they are of ancient lineage: the potato, barely three centuries introduced, has not displaced them in traditional ceremony. It is the young folks' day. Many of the games played turn upon the theme of identifying the future husband, and we shall see in the following chapters that match-making and marriage were among the functions of the great festivals, closely linked up with the magic of the earth's increase and the prosperity of crops and animals.

In parts of Ireland curious traditions attach to St. Martin's Eve (November 10th) and the feast on the following day. A sheep or a fowl is ceremonially killed and its blood sprinkled in the corners of the house. No wheel must turn on the day of the festival. Finally there are the mid-winter celebrations, now marked by Christmas and New Year, which carry the year round towards St. Bridget's Eve. On St. Stephen's Day (December 26th) the hunting of the wren was formerly an occasion for general revel: it is now little more than a children's game.

We must conclude this chapter with some suggestions, necessarily brief and tentative, as to the importance of these seasonal gatherings in the social and commercial life of peasant Ireland. From very early times the major ritual assemblies of the year provided opportunity for exchange of goods, of livestock and of news, and for the maintenance of folk tradition and bardic skill. In ancient Ireland it is recorded that there were two kinds of assemblies, the "aonach" for pleasure and the "aireacht" for business, but it seems probable that, like the great fairs of recent times, they served both purposes. It is suggestive of the ritual and religious element in the old assemblies that they generally met upon hill-tops—often the sites of prehistoric burials—and that they took place at the fixed times marking the beginning of the Celtic seasons. May and November remain the favourite periods for country fairs, and the hiring fairs were always held at these times. A century ago the February and August fairs were also of considerable importance. The Old Lammas Fair

231 is said to be due to the expense of importing feedstuffs. Donkeys and Con-
[492] nemara ponies are kept as draft animals, and almost everything is conveyed in panniers. There are only five carts
[493] on the island, of which the first was made in 1907 by a local carpenter from one he had seen on the mainland. The
335 two carpenters make anything required, including lobster pots, fishing nets, furniture, doors, windows, and hand barrows, which consist of two shafts joined by slats and a single wheel in the rear, all of wood.

221 Digging and manuring of the land begins in late February, and seaweed is brought from the shore as needed. The potatoes are planted about St. Patrick's Day (March 17); oats, two to three weeks later; barley and mangolds at the end of April or in May. Most calves are born from March to May. In dry years peat is cut from May onwards, laid out to dry, and eventually stacked in ricks six feet high secured by large stones, or placed against a stone wall. Apart from routine work, there is little to do until the hay harvest, generally in August or September, though sometimes a cut is made in July (as in 1954) with the hope of a second crop in the autumn. Oats and barley are harvested in September, after which the main potato digging takes place, though some are dug earlier for the household. From October to late February, there is little to do except tend the stock, though some men build walls four feet high at
[653] 12/6 a perch or mend roads under government schemes. Few farmers make the ricks of peat beside their houses so commonly seen in Ireland; most fetch it as required.

The Sea

228 Encouragement of fishing was a major aim of the Congested Districts Board, and from the eighteen-nineties to the

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the rural community. It is convenient for the farmer to live among his fields near his stock—to look after the calving cow—and for the farmer's wife to keep a close watch on her poultry. (Not long ago, as we shall see, it was quite common for the cows to share the kitchen, and the cow-byre and dwelling house are still often under the same roof.) But for jobs requiring traction-implements or expensive tools the help of neighbours is necessary. The small family-farm can support only one horse, and thus there is a good deal of co-operation, perforce, among neighbours in tilling the ground, in harvest work and other operations. Both seed-time and harvest are, in the Irish climate, seasons of heavy pressure, when the work must be got through speedily, and nothing is so conducive to speed as a 'gathering' of neighbours among whom a spirit of rivalry acts as a spur. These relics of former communal habits are becoming less frequent with mechanization, but in many districts not less than a quarter of the small farmers possess only one horse, so that 'joining' or 'cooring' to make up a two-horse team is usual. In all such cases no money payments are made. A fairly common practice, however, is for the small farmer to buy a second horse at the February fairs and sell it in May after the spring work is finished.

In this and other ways the isolated houses are bound by ties of neighbourhood and friendship so that one may think of them as forming close-knit communities lacking only the physical nucleation of former times. The improving planners, eager to confer urban amenities on the countryside, would have 'housing schemes' and planned villages in place of scattered houses, but nothing could be less suitable under existing conditions. Physical independence is the price paid for good neighbourliness. The old clachans, necessary so long as the infield-outfield or rundale method of land-use was practised, became a hopeless anachronism when new tools and new crops brought with them a rotational system and hedged fields.

We have little knowledge of the nature of rural settlement in sixteenth and seventeenth century Ireland, but since partnership farming, presumably with clachans and rundale, is well attested in ancient Ireland and is known to have been widespread in the eighteenth century it is safe to suppose that there was a

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III

BALLY AND BOOLEY

BAILE (bally) is the Gaelic word for the home-place or townland,[1] Ireland's smallest administrative unit; buaile (booley) the name of the summer milking-place or shieling where in times past the flocks and their tenders spent the summer months. I believe that seasonal nomadism (transhumance) between bally and booley is an important and neglected aspect of Irish social history, and one which goes far to explain many features of traditional life. It is significant that the Irish word for a boy (buachaill) originally meant a herdsman. The charge of nomadism, using the word in its worst connotation, which English writers made against the Irish, finds some justification in the prevalence of a pastoral economy which was, in fact, more comparable to that of the Swiss peasants or the Norwegian milk-girls. Wherever transhumance is or has been practised, it is associated with difficult environments and marginal conditions, where it has provided opportunities for escape from authority and served as a means of preserving and transmitting ancient traditions. This is well illustrated in the example of the Carpathian shepherds of Roumania.

It is clear from the Irish laws and from the findings of archaeology that farming practice had permitted some degree of permanent settlement long before the dawn of the Middle Ages, probably by early Celtic times. Of all the administrative units

[1] I have discussed the townland unit in my *Mourne Country*, Ch. 11. My colleague Mr. J. B. Arthurs thinks that the word *baile* may be a very old pre-Goidelic word, and that where 'ballys' are numerous the indigenous peoples had been left mainly undisturbed by Goidelic expansion.

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evidence that periodic re-allotment had been a general practice. It continued well into last century in some parts of the country, for example Antrim, Cork, Kerry, Mayo, Galway and Kilkenny. The casting of lots, annually[1] or triennially[2] was the occasion for much display of feeling, and was regulated by a headman or 'king' who also made arrangements for the summer pasturing.[3] In Kilkenny[4] the lots were cast by means of marked stones wrapped in clay. The ritual was prolonged. 'They sometimes play at it to try their luck before they will cast lots in good earnest. Even then they must sometimes make a new division if too many are dissatisfied.'[5]

To understand the openfield system in full working order we should see it in its total geographical setting, the booley with the bally. Here in the hilly fringes of Europe, towards the ocean, even moderately fertile land is limited in extent: soils derived from barren rocks and heavily leached by excessive rains are subject to waterlogging, acidity and the accumulation of peat. Spring is the only season without excessive rain, and ploughing or digging in autumn or winter even if possible is unprofitable. Winter wheat is a risky crop in most parts, and the emphasis is on spring corn, especially oats. This meant that the arable land was free of crops from October to April, and it allowed pasturing and manuring by livestock for rather more than half the year. So deep-rooted is this communal pasturing that there are districts in Donegal where to this day the livestock of the whole townland has the run of all the farms through the winter. And elsewhere, as I know to my cost, having tried for many years to cultivate a garden in the Mountains of Mourne, one's neighbours have a lingering habit of ignoring the fences at that season, when food for livestock is scarce.

Manuring and treading of the infield by cattle and sheep were supplemented in spring by quantities of manure taken from the cabins, 'some houses having . . . from ten to fifteen

[1]Antrim: Ordnance Survey Memoirs, Rathlin Island (1830); Cork and Kerry: Lord Dufferin, *Irish Emigration* (1867), 349.
[2]P. Knight, *Erris in the Irish Highlands* (1836), 47.
[3]ibid. For Norwegian parallels see *The Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 4 (1956), 17–81, 77.
[4]W. Tighe, *Statistical Observations, County of Kilkenny* (1802), 419.
[5]Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 117.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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tons weight of dung, and only cleaned out once a year!'[1] Sea wrack and shell sand were carted up to thirty miles inland from the coast.[2] In the absence of permanent fences the majority of the cattle must be moved away during the summer and those remaining carefully herded or tethered on the outfield, or put in temporary enclosures to manure that part of the outfield which was due for cultivation.[3] In its origins and full development the rundale system depended on the movement of most of the livestock to summer booleys situated some distance away. Here the widely distributed uplands and boglands played their part in the traditional economy. Although late survivals of the booleying system are hard to find, little of it managing to outlive the crisis of the Great Famine, we are beginning to track down its history and significance. The Irish texts are as disappointing and vague as they are in many matters touching the common people, but folk-memory comes to our aid. There are stories, and place-name evidence, from most parts of the country, and regional variants of the practice are being studied and mapped.[4]

We give first some quotations from the few discerning observers who drew attention to the practice. Edmund Spenser's enlightened spirit of inquiry is shown in his remark: 'Have you ever heard what was the occasion and first beginning of this custom? for it is good to know the same.' He writes, in 1595, 'There is one use amongst them, to keep their cattle and to live themselves the most part of the year in boolies, pasturing upon the mountain and waste wild places.'[5] His objections to the system, however, reveal his Englishry: the booleys hid outlaws and loose people, and the wandering life made the Irish barbarous. The following brief reference comes from O'Flaherty's famous account of West Connacht: 'In summertime they drive their cattle to the mountains, where such as look to the cattle live in small cabins for that season.'[6] In the eighteenth

[1] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 17.
[2] E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country* (1951), 141.
[3] W. Harris, *The Ancient and Present State of the County of Down* (1744), 131.
[4] J. M. Graham, 'Transhumance in Ireland', in *The Advancement of Science*, 57 (1958), 74–9.
[5] Quoted in H. Morley, *Ireland Under Elizabeth and James I* (1890), 67.
[6] R. O'Flaherty, *H'Iar Connaght* (1684), 17.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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century we find a description from Ulster: 'In the bosom of the Mourne Mountains there is a place called the Deers' Meadow to which great numbers of poor people resort in the summer months to graze their cattle. They bring with them their wives, children and little wretched furniture, erect huts, and there live . . . and often cut their turf.'[1] A century later a fuller account of a more complicated transhumance, reminiscent of the Norwegian seaboard, comes from Donegal: 'It often happens that a man has three dwellings—one in the mountains, another upon the shore, and the third upon an island, he and his family flitting from one to another of these habitations . . . This change usually takes place upon a fixed day, the junior branches of the family generally perform the land journey on the top of the household goods with which the pony may often be seen so loaded, and at the same time so obscured, that little more than the head can be observed; and thus the chair or two, the creels, and the iron pot, the piggin, and the various selected et cetera . . . creep along the roads.'[2] The author goes on to comment on the restrictions imposed on the comfort and possessions of the peasants by their 'Arab mode of life'. In Achill Island too the movements were complicated, involving the entire population which, having moved to the summer pastures and sowed their corn, returned to the permanent coastal village for the high summer to fish and went back to gather the harvest at the booley in the autumn.[3]

For the most part we are dependent on folk tradition for details of booleying. The Ordnance Survey Letters written in the 1830s contain valuable material from Counties Antrim and Londonderry, and the following extract relates to the parish of Dunaghy: 'Some of the very old men of the country recollect seeing the boliehouses inhabited. They were built of sods upon a foundation of earth and stones and were thatched with heath. Many of the poorer sort lived here in summer grazing the cattle upon land that nobody appears to have claimed and supporting themselves upon their milk and blood which they took from

[1]W. Harris, *The Ancient and Present State of the County of Down* (1744), 125.
[2]Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 24.
[3]An account by Sir William Wilde, written in 1836, is contained in Wood-Martin, *The Rude Stone Monuments of Ireland* (1888), 238.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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221 234 them occasionally. To render the latter more palatable they are said to have mixed it with the leaves of the wild sorrel.'

[262] [511] In Achill a few old people still nostalgically accompany their cows to the old booleying grounds, but everywhere else the system has died out completely. Many hilly districts, however, are open runs for summering stock which are visited periodically or placed in charge of a herd. This system was prevalent in the early nineteenth century and is thus described in the Ordnance Survey Letters for County Londonderry, parish of Upper Cumber. 'Herds are partially employed, males and females indiscriminately, who tend the cattle in the summer on the moors and mountain farms. They are from ten to sixteen years old and are paid for that half year from 15s. to 21s. In winter they return to their parents, who are burdened with their support from November to May.' In theory the total number of grazing units in a commonage is calculated and the units allotted to each landholder in proportion to the size of his farm—originally to his share in the openfield. The unit is [804] known as a collop (in Ulster and Mayo a sum—the Scottish equivalent) and is the amount of pasturage that will support a cow. The sums may be taken up by other animals, and a scale which varies slightly from one district to another gives the equation. Thus a sum equals three parts of a horse, four sheep, eight goats or twenty geese. With the decline in the utilization of the hill-pastures and the general breakdown of traditional practices, grazing rights on commonages are neglected and stinting is rarely operative.

The observant walker in the hills will notice in sheltered hollows by the banks of streams clusters of grassy mounds set in a green sward, or it may be small piles of stones under some rocky outcrop. These are the only tangible relics of the [361] booley houses, and in most parts of Ireland they were deserted [342] so long ago that the shepherd will tell you they are the remains of Danes' houses.

Only where the huts were stone-built are the remains easily 342 recognizable. In Achill Island they are oval in shape, or rec- 361 tangular with rounded corners, and many have the opposite doorways which are still characteristic of the winter dwellings. In some bogland areas where place-names and traditions tell

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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XII

HARVEST

THANKS to the necessity of 'winning' (seasoning) hay and corn in the fields before the crops are carried home, harvest time drags on from late summer to the edge of winter, and the word 'harvest' as we have seen is a synonym for autumn. In this pastoral Irish country the hay harvest is nowadays of vital importance in farm economy, yet I cannot find any evidence that hay played a significant part in the traditional Gaelic system of farming. It is the sickle, not the scythe, which figures in folk-lore and in place-names, and the scythe seems to be a relative newcomer in most parts of the country. It requires a stone-free sward which would be hard to seek on hill farms. The business of hay-making was, I believe, of little importance until the economic changes of the agrarian revolution and the introduction of rotation grass. In the North the date of the first hay-cutting is fixed by a celebrated but relatively new festival, the Orangeman's day on the 12th of July. After hay comes flax, which is pulled from late July to mid-August, followed by wheat and barley in the areas where they are grown, by the corn harvest in September and the potato-lifting in October. In bad years hay may still be uncut in late August, the mountain corn is green even at the end of September, and late-cut corn sometimes stays stacked in the fields up to Christmas—indeed there are records of the grain being reaped after Christmas[1]—but traditionally all harvest work was completed by All-Hallows.

In Scandinavia it has been claimed that hay-making began in pre-historic times as a result of the climatic deterioration which took place during the last millennium B.C. In Ireland with its

[1]For example in 1817. J. Donaldson, *Upper Fews*, 25.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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XIX

FIXED FESTIVALS

THE great fairs, patterns and pilgrimages were attended by people who travelled considerable distances and included strange folk from the outside world, 'beyond the mountain men'. It was partly for this reason that they earned a reputation for lawlessness, especially where 'the gatherings' had outlived their original purpose and their real business had become subordinate to pleasure. A Nottingham Goose Fair or a Marlborough Mop Fair may still be conducted with propriety, but in Ireland they would probably have become Donnybrooks. Having little opportunity for regular social contacts as compared with the villagers of the ploughlands, a pastoral people makes the most of the periodic pauses in the cycle of the seasons.

For climatic reasons these great gatherings have been largely confined to the summer half-year between May and November. The winter festivals have been more local, involving the family and the townland rather than rival groups from different parishes and baronies. The feast days of both St. Briget and St. Patrick fall in early spring and their associations are more intimate and have more local colour than those of the saints of high summer such as St. John the Baptist. But the entire round of the year is liberally sprinkled with days of festival, and if we begin with St. Briget it is not merely because she was Irish-born but because her feast marks the beginning of the pastoral year. The blessed Bridie was a cowherd and is therefore associated with cattle and with such flowers as the dandelion—the Plant of Bride—yielding a milky juice which was believed to nourish the young lambs in spring. St. Briget's Feast was very popular and many superstitious practices, more or less

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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527 It was popularly believed that the saint wandered through
776 the countryside on the eve of her feast day. Bread was left on the doorstep, and in some districts it was the custom to prepare a small bed of rushes or birch twigs and place it by the fire so that Bridie might come in and rest. Sometimes the last sheaf of harvest was used for the purpose. In south-western Ireland a [532] doll made of straw—or decorated churn-staff—was carried [292] from house to house by 'Biddy Boys', wearing straw masks such as are used by mummers and by strawboys at weddings, and singing songs in honour of the saint. They would solicit [264] gifts and end the day in jollification. The evening was celebrated [787] by a supper of pancakes taken from a plate laid on a rush cross, and as on the other quarter-days prognostications were made. [789] A ribbon or piece of cloth exposed on St. Briget's Eve became endowed with curative powers. It was believed that no work which involved the turning of a wheel should take place on the saint's day. The placing of a periwinkle in each corner of the kitchen likewise hints at a remote pre-agricultural origin for the festival, but it came to be associated with the pastoral promise of spring, of warmth, new grass, lambs and milk. It is said that the saint placed her foot in water on her feast day so that on that day it begins to warm up each year.

St. Patrick is credited with carrying the process a stage further by putting a stone in the water, or alternatively 'turning [805] up the warm side of the stone'. 17th March marks the end of winter and the starting-point of work in the fields. The country- [221] man likes to have his first ridge of potatoes planted on that day, and he is not greatly moved by the patriotic celebrations which are anyhow more in evidence in New York and Boston than in Ireland. Traditionally the cult of St. Patrick is strongest in Ulster, where hundreds of churches and holy wells are named in his honour, and according to legend he was reluctantly accepted as patron saint in some of the other Irish regions. They say in [191] Ulster that Connachtmen speak with husky accents because their forebears stole and ate St. Patrick's goat. Like Columbkille, Patrick is remembered for his curses as well as his prophecies, [824] for instance he cursed the rushes that pricked him when he rested, so that every green rush has a brown tip.

527 To refer to all the associations of the movable feasts of

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241 soil covered. There was little "field-making" at the beginning of this century, and
[731] few plots south of the terrace crest were utilized for farming. Fields on the terraces were planted yearly with potatoes and other vegetables, but in the 1920s the "eelworm" parasite invaded the island and forced the present custom of
[659] fallowing plots for at least four years. This development necessitated the creation of new fields at the back, and when the government began to subsidize field making during the 1930s, and fence construction later on, another impetus to the manu-
[114] facture of additional land was provided. Most of the literature pertaining to Inis Beag, influenced by nativism and primitivism, claims that field and fence building has proceeded for centuries (even millennia) and disavows the existence of indigenous soils.

• 221 The year in Inis Beag commences in February with the advent of spring,
222 when seaweed is gathered, fields are manufactured, and crops are planted. Although
241 some seaweed is collected in the summer and autumn and stored in "cocks" near the shore or in outbuildings for later use, most of it is cut and pulled in January
[133] and February at the time of spring tides. There is a maximum 15¾ feet difference between flood and ebb spring tides in Inis Beag, and normally submerged reefs rich in seaweed are bared three to four hours daily for two or three days twice each month. The men await a "good strand" to gather seaweed, when the tide is lowest during the daylight hours and not influenced by wave or swell action, for this is a dangerous task which sometimes demands wading in water thigh deep. The folk are amused greatly by a sequence from a noted film about them depicting a woman carrying seaweed along the coast during a raging storm; the footage was created by the producer to satisfy esthetic canons and to portray the primitive and Celtic virtues.

241 The generic term for natural fertilizers is "manure" and includes seaweed, compost, and guano. The islanders also use chemical fertilizers to some extent, particularly in areas where soils are deficient in manganese. Compost varies much in composition and may include human and animal feces, called "dung," turf ashes, and decaying vegetable matter, such as ferns and the sod "scraws" of thatched roofs
[514] being dismantled. Nowhere in the literature is the use of human manure mentioned, and the folk are extremely secretive about its use, as they also are about burning cow dung for fuel in times of emergency. Their reticence about disclos-
[654] ing these practices is a product of sexual puritanism. Young farmers are more willing than their elders to follow the advice of the Department of Agriculture agent stationed in a neighboring island, and are coming to use chemical fertilizers more commonly than was the case in the past. The islanders eschew artificial commodities which impinge on the human body, and often I have heard chemical fertilizers denounced because they supposedly are manufactured from "bones of evil persons buried in cemeteries" on the Continent, or victims of the plague centuries ago. Some farmers hold artificial fertilizers to blame for both the potato blight and the eelworm parasite.

824 Four kinds of seaweed are utilized by the folk: ribbon weed, string weed or sea thong, red or May weed, and black weed or bladder wrack. The most commonly used variety is red weed, once the major source of kelp, which is washed in
[437] the year around and is stripped of its leaves when collected. Its stems are known

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ous and high in Inis Beag so as to prevent the sparse soils from being blown away by Atlantic gales; the truth of the matter is that fences serve as boundaries, are repositories for uprooted rocks that farmers, understandably, do not wish to transport long distances, and by their very construction provide a source of income. Once a field is leveled, it is spread with sand, compost, and sometimes indigenous soils carried from other areas to enrich the new garden. This is a job which is carried on the year around, and children often are pressed into service, loading creels with sand from the strand and common land and driving laden animals to the plots above.

Newly made fields can grow potatoes two years in succession before being fallowed, but old ones must lie fallow four years until the eelworm disappears. The folk, however, plant spuds in their old plots every six to ten years, when moss has accumulated to such a degree that the growth of grass sufficient for grazing and haying is impeded. The potato planting technique is known as the "ridge-and-furrow" or "lazy-bed" method on the mainland, but these terms are not used in Inis Beag. Setting a garden involves first of all constructing parallel "ridges," about 30 inches in width, the length of a field. "Ditches" are dug with a spade, and sods are "turned over" onto strips of seaweed; then more dirt is "trenched" over other seaweed, compost, guano, and chemical fertilizers placed in the center of the ridges (see Fig. 6). The whole procedure is called "manuring," and two months later the garden is again trenched with dirt distributed at the base of the sprouting vines. Between the time of seeding and harvesting, the plot is weeded by hand once or twice and sprayed two or three times with a mixture of copper sulphate and water to combat the potato blight.

Potato seeds are purchased in sacks from the agricultural agent or obtained from the previous year's crop, and it takes almost 100 pounds of seed to plant a

Figure 6. Soil being trenched in setting a garden

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244 quarter-acre garden. The seed potatoes are cut so that each segment has two "eyes," and they are "stabbed" into the ridges in three rows with a digging stick, deep enough to escape the foraging of birds and rats, yet above the decaying seaweed [462] which can "burn" the seed and cause it not to yield. It is not uncommon for [857] women and children to stab seeds while the man of the house is trenching ridges in another part of the field. Many kinds of spuds are grown by the islanders, some of which are "early" and can be harvested before the end of June; the folk argue the relative merits of varieties of potatoes just as they do the use of fertilizers and farming techniques.

• 221 244 626 Planting must be completed before the cuckoo arrives in late April and sounds its call, and the person who is still seeding when the bird first is heard is the subject of ridicule. The laggard in some parts of Ireland is called a "cuckoo farmer," and it is said in Inis Beag that one who is "lazy about planting is lazy about everything." A tale is told of a Castle villager who saw another man, considered by the islanders to be overly indolent, cutting potato seeds in early April, whereupon he climbed the wall of the castle and imitated the song of the cuckoo. The victim of the practical joke gave up his job in disgust and fed the seed to his poultry. My wife and I witnessed a heated argument in a pub over the date of arrival of the first cuckoo of 1960. Word was passed among the men, some of whom were still planting, that a lighthouse keeper had heard the song five days before. The keeper was denounced as an exaggerator and "troublemaker," and agreement was reached that the bird always is heard first in Low Village and not at the back of the island. The official date of the cuckoo's arrival later was set at April 27th—15 days after its alleged appearance at the lighthouse.

244 "Late" potatoes are harvested from the ridges by spade as needed from mid-July until the end of October, at which time the gardens are emptied (see [251] Fig. 7). The harvested spuds are separated in the fields into those to be fed to livestock, those to be used for seeding the next year, and those to be eaten; then [626] they are transported by horse or ass to be stored in outbuildings. Just as the person who has failed to complete seeding by the time the cuckoo arrives is censured by his neighbors, so is the one who has not removed all of his potatoes from the ground by mid-November. As a man said to me when evaluating potential sons-in-law, "The father of a girl would think twice about marrying off his daughter to a man who didn't have his spuds in by the middle of the month."

262 244 Supplementing the potato dominated diet of the folk are other locally grown vegetables: cabbages, carrots, onions, turnips, parsnips, and lettuce. They are planted between March and May in ridges in much the same manner as spuds—on fallowing land, in small areas within fields containing indigenous soils which have been improved for this purpose, and in gardens in the villages where [443] they are readily accessible. The more prosperous Inis Beag families also avail [462] themselves of canned peas, beans, and carrots sold in the shops. It is usual for men to plant vegetables, but both men and women tend them to maturity and collect the plants after early September as they are needed for the table.

246 221 Once the potato fields are emptied, most farmers plant grass in them before the coming of winter. This allows the hay to be cut in June and July of the following year, after which more grass will come in for fall and winter pasturage. Grass

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246
133
333
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Figure 7. Harvesting spuds near the lake below Terrace Village

seed is thrown out by hand and the top soil turned over by spade to cover it, a task often shared by a man and his offspring. The farmer who wishes to use a plot only for growing hay usually will seed it during the spring after it has yielded spuds and will not permit animals to graze on it until it has been cut and the hay stored. No further seeding is required after the initial one, even though ten years may elapse before potatoes once again are planted. 246 221

The tools employed in cutting and stacking hay are the sickle, called a "reaping hook," the scythe, the pitchfork, and the rake. Most are imported, but a few men own handmade rakes whose parts are wooden and fitted together. The farmers substitute wide brimmed felt hats for their usual caps when haying, and do so again a month later when "pulling" rye; the hat is purported to be cooler than the cap and affords protection to the neck of the wearer when he bends over for long spells under a hot sun. Many folk claim that cutting hay is the most strenuous of their jobs on land or sea, but the men work slowly and rest often, just as they do when engaged in other arduous tasks, some of which appear to the outsider to demand a greater output of energy than manipulating a sickle or scythe. Once cut, hay is raked into parallel rows across the field for drying, then formed into cocks, known as "saving the hay," by hand or using a rake, "fork," or scythe. It is possible to stack hay into cocks 24 hours after cutting it, then to transport it to barns and outbuildings after a like period of time (see Fig. 8), but rain and the press of other duties can prolong the operation for as long as two weeks. Seeds for autumn planting are shaken from the hay on the floor of the storage building before the crop is stacked away to furnish winter fodder. 246 [293] [461] [343]

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kelp-making has disappeared, pig rearing has been abandoned, and fishing has become mainly a subsistence pursuit engaged in by only a small number of islanders. Hand in glove with these developments came the enlargement of arable lands and hence an increase in good pasturage, first necessitated by the intrusion of the eelworm and then stimulated by government agricultural supports. Farming became a more time consuming and lucrative occupation, as did the breeding and fattening of cattle and sheep for export, and the keeping of horses and asses expanded to accommodate the increased emphasis on farming. Thus, while the subsistence economy changed but slightly in two generations, the money economy experienced a radical alteration.

At the present time, 59 householders own one or more cattle; 56, one or more sheep; 22, one or more horses; and 58, one or more asses, among whom 8 have 2 asses and 1 a jennet. The government regulates the breeding of both cattle and horses, with the result that only one man is licensed to own a bull and the horses are mares or geldings. Cows are serviced for a 1 pound stud fee in the most inaccessible of fields, where children and tourists cannot observe the breeding of the "beasts." Most of the asses, just as the bulls and stallions, are castrated, but in this case to prevent them from kicking down fences and braying excessively when sexually aroused. Whereas almost all of the horses and asses and a few cattle have been imported from the mainland, the sheep population is Inis Beag sired. For the most part, cattle are grazed on fallowing plots, the few goats on crags at the back of the island, and other livestock on indigenous pasturage.

Cattle owners usually possess a "milch cow," a yearling, and a calf, and cows and bullocks are sold at two years of age. When a milch cow becomes old and "dried up," it either is fattened and sold or, if the price on the mainland is low, butchered and eaten by the householder and his family, usually between Allhallows and Christmas. "Cattle jobbers" visit the island to purchase cows and bullocks, and in 1960 they were paying between 60 and 80 pounds per beast. Excitement prevails on the strand on days when cattle are shipped off. Each struggling animal is pushed out into the sea by a group of men and then pulled to a canoe by a rope attached around its neck; its head is held over the stern transom of the *curach* for the trip to the steamer, where it is hoisted from the water and swung high over the deck and into a hold. Sometimes an islander is forced by circumstances to import a calf, and in 1960 the purchase price of calves at the fair in a nearby port was approximately 20 pounds; a colt cost about 50 pounds and an ass 5.

Probably the most striking difference between cattle rearing on the mainland and in Inis Beag is that island cows are not stabled, but forage and are milked throughout the year in the fields. Between November and March, they are pastured south of the terrace crest on fallowing and the more luxuriant of the indigenous plots, fed hay and rye carried to them from barns and outbuildings, and watered by bucket from neighboring springs which are swollen from winter rains. Men and boys care for their needs during this period, and often spend as many as three hours walking out and back to the pastures twice each day. With the coming of spring, cows are moved to fields on the terraces where women and children can feed and milk them, or men, who are now entering on the busy agricultural and

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221 233 234 [462] fishing season, will not use up so much time getting to and from the pastures. Other reasons for shifting cows are that the village wells are more dependable than the springs at the back of the island during occassional summer dry spells, and cows when "tormented" by insects can run about the terrace fields more safely than they can the rockier and more fissured indigenous and improved plots above. [512] Milking is done between eight thirty and ten o'clock in the morning and four thirty and six in the afternoon during the winter, and an hour or two later in the summer. When milking, the farmer crouches at the right side of the beast and holds a pail with his left hand while drawing one teat at a time with his right. He murmurs to the cow in Irish to keep it pacified, and is ready to move swiftly should the animal suddenly shift its position.

653 312 [233] To encourage cattle breeding, the government subsidizes the construction of reservoirs at the back of the island for collecting rain water, and of barns and outbuildings for storing hay, rye, potatoes, and farming and fishing equipment. The typical reservoir is placed in an area surrounded by actual or potential grazing land located at a considerable distance from the nearest spring. It is composed of a cemented stone platform with a slanting concave surface which drains into a [343] rectangular shaped tank. Barns and outbuildings are small stone structures, usually thatched, which are single roomed and doored and may have one or two small windows. The barns, like the reservoirs, are placed within easy access of fields used for pasturage.

233 236 Sheep are reared in Inis Beag to furnish wool, as well as to be sold and slaughtered for local consumption. They demand little care, as they are allowed to graze in undeveloped pastures and to obtain water from rain filled depressions in the pavement and from plants that they devour. Kept by their owners for five or six years and then disposed of, they are sheared once a year between May and July. There are white, brown, and black haired varieties, and between six and eight [437] pounds of wool can be procured from an animal every shearing. If a householder possesses a large herd, he may choose to sell some of his lambs when they are six months old, and in August many lambs are shipped from Inis Beag on the steamer. [262] Although some folk from time to time slaughter their own sheep to provide meat [437] for the tables, several householders maintain large herds and specialize in selling lamb and mutton to visitors and fellow islanders.

231 [232] [224] All Inis Beag homes have at least one dog and most of them have a cat. These animals perform certain services and act as pets. At the time walls were low at the back of the island, dogs were employed to round up sheep, and they also aided their owners hunt rabbits along the rock piled shore of the west sound, when the meat of this animal was eaten more commonly than it is today. Now, their duties are restricted to warning of the approach of strangers and chasing chickens out of the kitchen. Cats are kept to catch mice, and their presence on the premises is sufficient to keep rats from approaching the house and outbuildings. They are treated less well than dogs, but both dogs and cats are given little affection and often are not fed enough. It is true that some islanders are strongly attached to their pets and provide them with adequate care, but they are the exceptions. A man devoted to his dog will be followed about the island by the animal, and a desired trait in a dog is that it will not show interest in persons outside of the

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household. Some cats have reverted to a wild state and roam the back of the island, sheep occasionally are killed by hungry dogs, and young people will entertain themselves by baiting dogs to fight. By and large, animals, especially asses, in Inis Beag are treated roughly or with indifference.

Fishing

It is estimated that between 30 and 50 three-men crews from Inis Beag fished regularly almost the year around at the beginning of the century. At that time there were ten families of fisherfolk—six in Low Village, two in High, and one each in the other two communities—who subsisted mainly on money obtained from the sale of their catches or by bartering fish for needed goods and services. Only farming and kelp-making intermittently interfered with the fishing regime of landholders, and fishing ceased altogether only for parts of December and January, when inclement weather and the Christmas season intruded. Women and children were deeply involved in the fishing endeavor, just as they were in farming and livestock rearing, to free their menfolk for fishing. Crews ranged the coast of Inis Beag and neighboring islands, the two sounds, the mainland coast for 20 miles, and Atlantic shallows 5 to 8 miles offshore. Lines 40 fathoms in length were "shot" for ling and cod, and nets over a mile in length were drifted to ensnare spring mackerel. At times when fish were particularly abundant, fishermen would be out daily for a week or two, arising long before dawn to have their lines down before daybreak, and returning home as late as midnight.

Sixty years later, a sharply contrasting situation prevails, wherein not only has the exporting of fish almost been discontinued, but fish no longer rank as a major staple in the diet of the folk and are not even eaten several months of the year. Nine three-men crews fished fairly regularly with nets and lines between February and October of 1960 and exported or sold locally part of their catches, and two crews fished for lobsters. Fishing now is carried on within a mile of the island, and only one crew ventured as far as the mainland in 1960. It was customary in the past for crews to fish for two consecutive days off a mainland peninsula and sleep overnight in their canoes or lodge in a village there, a venture which required over 30 miles of backbreaking labor at the oars. Line fishing today is done in shallow waters, only short nets are employed, and the men do not care to spend long hours at their task. Elders bemoan the present state of affairs for several reasons, one of them being the loss of fishing lore accumulated over the centuries —knowledge of the ocean floor, of deep currents, of the habitats and movements of fish, not to mention knowledge relating to the manufacture and care of fishing gear and fishing techniques themselves.

Most important of the factors which gradually have restricted fishing are the actions of foreign trawlers—particularly Spanish and French ones, the shift of migratory routes of fish, and long range changes in the weather. During the 1890s, foreign trawlers commenced to fish the waters surrounding Inis Beag, and in the decades since they have increased in number and have fished ever closer to the coast, until now they often penetrate within the legal limit. Not only have

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duced trawlers and other types of fishing vessels and financed their purchase by islanders of the region, sent instructors to teach fishermen how to use the new boats and gear, set up curing and storage facilities in the islands, facilitated the shipping of fish to mainland markets, and attempted to regulate these markets so as to ensure maximum profits for the folk. These efforts failed for the most part in Inis Beag, and today the men fish from *curach*, much as did their grandfathers. The continuing effort of the government to improve fishing in the area is reflected in instruction in modern fishing techniques at a school in a nearby island, and the successful operation of a number of government financed trawlers and other fishing boats from there.

The islanders consider fish from the sea, which are netted, more palatable and healthier to eat than those caught with lines and trawls, fresh water fish, and fish which have been cured or frozen. Fish taken on lines, because they bleed, and those enmeshed in trawls, because they suffocate, are thought to suffer in taste and nourishment, as do those which are treated artificially for sale; and fresh water fish are believed to be unhealthy to eat because they feed on refuse thrown into lakes and rivers rather than on natural foods. Some folk exclude even mackerel from their diet, since these fish "swim on the surface and eat everything dirty afloat." We already have noted that Inis Beag elders prefer seaweed to chemical fertilizers; the preference for netted fish which feed on natural foods to fresh water fish and mackerel which are contaminated is another example of a recurrent cultural theme—the positive valuation of natural objects and the negative valuation of artificial ones which come in contact with the human body. Other manifestations of this theme are the emphasis placed on folk medicines and the distrust of medicines prescribed by nurse and doctor, the belief that certain foods will assure health and combat specific illnesses, and the fear of piped water and canned foods. I often was told that I could improve my eyesight by giving up my glasses and rubbing dew on my eyelids, or by walking along the seashore to allow the wind and spray to penetrate my eyeballs.

Over 30 varieties of fish are caught off Inis Beag, some with lines of varying length and number of hooks, others in the four types of nets, and a few with both lines and nets. Most important of the fish are: ling, cod, bream, gurnet, haddock, and autumn mackerel caught with lines; plaice, turbot, rock fish, and pollack both netted and taken on lines; and herring and spring mackerel captured in special nets. Trammel and drag nets are used in addition to herring and mackerel nets, and the most commonly used baits are gurnet, haddock, conger eel, bream, herring, and limpets. Fishing techniques vary considerably, as do the times of the year when particular kinds of fish are available, the localities that they frequent, and the baits which are most effective for each variety. Fishing crews form at different times of the year, often to fish in certain areas for specific fish. They are composed of both kin and close friends, and they tend to alter in membership from year to year as other activities intrude.

Before I leave the subject of fishing, I wish to correct three commonly held misconceptions concerning Inis Beag men: they are all skilled seamen; because they spend much of their time at sea they are of necessity able swimmers; and

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November 1st. Imbolc heralded the coming of spring with the lactation of ewes, while at Beltaine cattle were driven to open grazing after passing between bonfires which magically protected them against disease and ensured their fertility. The harvest commenced with Lughnasa, and the grazing season ended with Samhain. Of these festivals, Imbolc has become reinterpreted with the feast of St. Brigid; Beltaine and Samhain, known today as May Day and Allhallows respectively, have remained almost untouched by Christianity and are observed in Inis Beag; but Lughnasa has disappeared from island tradition. Lughnasa still is celebrated in many parts of Ireland and is the subject of a monumental folklore study—Maire MacNeill's *The Festival of Lughnasa*; until the introduction of early potatoes into Inis Beag, harvesting commenced on this day, but any other practices associated with Lughnasa were abandoned long ago. Minor pagan festivals have become reinterpreted with Whitsuntide and the feasts of St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, all of which are observed in Inis Beag.

Brigid, the most renowned of Irish female saints, was a cowherd and therefore is associated with cattle and with flowers, such as the dandelion, which nourish young lambs in the spring. On the last day of January, a small "Brigid's Cross" is fashioned from straw in each household of Inis Beag, and is thrust into the thatching at the end of the feast day. Crosses once were made from rushes, wood, metal, and even paper, and it is possible to determine the age of a thatched cottage being dismantled or renovated by counting the number of crosses salvaged from the straw debris. The Celts worshipped the sun whose symbol was the swastika, and the Brigid's Cross takes this form. It is a charm which protects the house (and the byre on the mainland) and those within it from harm, especially by fire, during the year. At the beginning of this century, a destitute woman who lived alone used to go from door to door begging for food and carrying a large "Brigid's Doll" made of straw and dressed immaculately in white with a picture of the saint on its breast. Some of the folk pulled straw from the doll to manufacture their crosses. After the woman recited the following poem, she was presented with food in honor of the saint, for which she blessed each person in the household with the doll:

Here comes Brigid
Dressed in white.
Give her something
For the night.

She is deaf and
She is dumb.
For God's sake,
Give her some.

Today, small groups of girls travel about the island emulating their predecessor by begging for coins to buy candy and donate to the church. A Brigid's Doll dressed in confirmation garb is carried by the leader of each group, and is used to confer blessings after the girls have recited in unison the two verses.

May Eve and Allhallows' Eve are both times when it is dangerous to go out of doors alone at night or be abroad after midnight, for the "big fellow" roams the back of the island, and everywhere pagan fairies, witches, vindictive ghosts, and the dog of the tumulus search for human victims. The safety of cattle is of particular concern to the folk on May Eve, and a common practice is to attach to the horn or tail of a cow a cloth containing a piece of iron which has

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538 539 or Sean O'Sullivan's recent *Folktales of Ireland*. But a further word must be said of the tales recited by the *seanchaí*. Popular among local legends are those dealing with such topics as the famine, evictions and other excesses of past landlords, visits to the island by the Black and Tans seeking political refugees, shipwrecks, and tragedies at sea among fishermen. Stories of the supernatural center around the actions of fairies, the pookah and banshee, those with the evil eye, phantom ships, mermaids and sea demons, and material objects possessing human attributes and 538 volitions. These local legends sometimes qualify as anecdotes, and it is humorous 522 anecdotes which the folk refer to as jokes. Outsiders—such as returned Yanks— [177] are responsible for introducing true jokes, but often these are not told and soon are forgotten, especially if they are "dirty jokes." There is no indigenous dirty joking tradition because of sexual puritanism. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendos, puns, and asides—that they believed bear sexual connotations; [123] relatively speaking, they are pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a [832] verse refers to an islander who arose late on the morning of the shipwreck after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate;" this is regarded as a highly suggestive phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub.

538 [221] [178] [524] [561] [562] Storytelling in the past took place mostly between the last week of October and early January, when inclement weather forced a slackening of the fishing regime, and the Christmas season kept people in and near their homes. Nowadays, card playing almost nightly during November and part of December by many of the men has become a substitute activity, which excludes the participation of women and children who once composed a part of the audience addressed by the storyteller. At any one time during this period, several groups met to hear Inis 538 573 Beag narrators; a *scéalaí* or *seanchaí* might be visited by a group and serve as host, or he might be invited into or visit on his own another household, and word of his presence would quickly draw an audience. The session lasted from eight or nine o'clock until midnight, and a tale might be so long that its telling occupied an entire evening, or even two or three consecutive nights. After completing a brief narrative, the storyteller might call on a colleague in the audience to recite a sequel, or the hearers might request that he continue or urge another to contribute a tale.

[857] [562] The average sized audience was composed of a dozen persons, although as many as 20 might attend a session. Small children seldom were allowed in the room unless they were members of the family of the host, nor were women of another household; the children were admonished to sit quietly and not to talk or whisper, and the women knitted or crocheted while listening. Seated in a semi-circle around the hearth, the hearers were faced by the narrator who was seated [574] on the right side of the fireplace, and the wife of the host on the left. Refreshments never were served, but a clay pipe was passed around among the men and very old women. The host furnished pipe and tobacco, and the pipe was passed back to him by each person in turn after being puffed on for several minutes. Only if the story was a long one was the pipe proffered by the host to the narrator from time to time.

538 561 [868] Most storytellers were men past the age of 60 years, but some were between 40 and 60 and a few even younger. An old narrator of reputation often called on a young man to recite in order to give him practice, if he felt that the